



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**



*United States Attorney's Office  
District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **MEXICAN NATIONAL SENTENCED TO 32 YEARS IN PRISON FOR TAKING ILLEGAL ALIENS HOSTAGE**

PHOENIX - Jorge Avena-Pardo, 23, from Mexico, was sentenced here late yesterday by U.S. District Judge David G. Campbell to 32 years in prison for his role in taking 17 illegal aliens hostage. On December 8, 2005, a federal jury found Avena-Pardo guilty of Hostage Taking and Conspiracy to Commit Hostage Taking; Carrying, Using, and Brandishing a Firearm During and in Relation to a Crime of Violence and Harboring Illegal Aliens.

The evidence at trial showed that the defendant and other co-conspirators highjacked the 17 illegal aliens as they drove through Phoenix in a pickup truck. The aliens were taken at gunpoint to a house in Phoenix and held captive to extract ransom from their families. During their ordeal the illegal aliens were told that if their families did not pay for their release, they would be taken to the desert and left to die.

U.S. Attorney Paul K. Charlton stated of the sentencing, "With more than a half million people crossing the Arizona border illegally each year, we focus our resources on the likes of Mr. Avena-Pardo who threatens the lives of others and makes our communities more dangerous."

"This sentence is the strongest possible message we can send to human smugglers who ruthlessly abuse the defenseless," said Roberto G. Medina, special agent in charge of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office of investigations in Arizona. "ICE will continue to focus its most rigorous enforcement efforts on those criminals who use firearms to threaten, coerce, and intimidate their victims."

The captives were rescued from the house after two of them escaped and contacted the Phoenix Police Department, who surrounded the house and ordered the occupants out. Avena-Pardo was not apprehended at the house, but was identified and located after an extensive investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

For his conviction on Hostage Taking and Conspiracy to Commit Hostage Taking charges, Avena-Pardo was sentenced to 300 months in prison, with a 120 month sentence for Harboring Illegal Aliens to be served concurrently. Avena-Pardo was sentenced to an additional 84 months for Carrying, Using, or Brandishing a Firearm, During and In Relation to a Crime of Violence, which by statute must be served consecutively to the 300 month sentence.

The investigation leading to the conviction and sentence was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, with assistance from the Glendale and Phoenix Police Departments. The prosecution was handled by Emory T. Hurley, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona.

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